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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9873
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RUEHTH/AMEMBASSY ATHENS 0214
RUEHBK/AMEMBASSY BANGKOK 3782
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RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 6835
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 4921
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 2963
RUEHNY/AMEMBASSY OSLO 4882
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 3988
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI 9238
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI 6548
RUEHON/AMCONSUL TORONTO 1089
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 3461
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RHMFIUU/CDRUSARPAC FT SHAFTER HI//APCW/APOP//
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI//J3/J332/J52//

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SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCA (BOUCHER), SCA/INS AND PRM
STATE ALSO PASS USAID
AID/W FOR ANE/SCA, DCHA/FFP (DWORKEN, KSHEIN)
AID/W FOR DCHA/OFDA (MORRISP, ACONVERY, RTHAYER, RKERR)
ATHENS FOR PCARTER
BANGKOK FOR USAID/DCHA/OFDA (WBERGER)
KATHMANDU FOR USAID/DCHA/OFDA AND POL (SBERRY)
GENEVA FOR RMA (NKYLOH, NHILGERT, MPITOTTI)
USUN NEW YORK FOR ECOSOC (D MERCADO)
SECDEF FOR OSD - POLICY
PACOM ALSO FOR J-5

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREF](#) [MOPS](#) [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ASEC](#) [CE](#)
SUBJECT: Northern Sri Lanka SitRep 61

REF: A) Colombo 459 B) Colombo 456 C) Colombo 454 D) Colombo 448 E)
Colombo 435 F) Colombo 432 G) Colombo 425 H) Colombo 418 I) Colombo
414 J) Colombo 413 K) Colombo 412 and previous

11. (SBU) SUMMARY: On April 27, the Government continued to reject calls for a ceasefire, but declared an end to combat operations. The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) promptly accused Government forces of continuing to bomb civilians. UN Undersecretary for Humanitarian Affairs John Holmes completed a 48-hour visit to Sri Lanka. The Government announced former Jaffna military commander G.A. Chandrasiri will oversee operations to assist displaced persons on the North. UNHCR reports over 120,000 civilians are now in Government-designated IDP camps, with many more due to arrive. End summary.

GOVERNMENT DECLARES END TO COMBAT

12. (SBU) The Government announced the end of combat operations on April 27. The statement follows days of repeated international calls for a ceasefire to permit civilians to escape the conflict zone, and Government rejections of those pleas. Military spokesman Udaya Nanayakkara clarified to reporters that the Government has not declared a ceasefire: "The Government of Sri Lanka has decided that combat operations have reached their conclusion. Our security forces have been instructed to end the use of heavy caliber guns, combat aircraft and aerial weapons which could cause civilian casualties." The statement notes that Government efforts will now turn toward

rescue of civilians. (COMMENT: President Rajapaksa first announced in mid-February that he ordered Government forces to cease use of heavy artillery out of concern for trapped civilians. Today's announcement may be an attempt to respond to international calls for a ceasefire - especially India's - without appearing to domestic constituents as caving to international demands.) As of the afternoon of April 27, sources report continued fighting in the conflict zone. The Pro-LTTE website TamilNet accused the Government of bombing civilians even after this announcement.

HOLMES VISIT CONCLUDES

13. (SBU) UN Undersecretary for Humanitarian Affairs John Holmes concluded his three-day visit to Sri Lanka with travel to the IDP camps in Vavuniya. (Note: Press accounts speculating that he might travel to the conflict zone were incorrect. The UN noted to Charge they would first send in security specialists to conduct a security assessment and obtain safety assurances prior to any other UN travel to this conflict area.) Holmes met with Charge and other heads of diplomatic missions on April 26, where he relayed his objective of pursuing a humanitarian pause, and of determining if any opportunities exist with contacts on the ground to pursue a negotiated surrender of the LTTE. Holmes plans to meet with President Rajapaksa tonight following his return from Vavuniya before leaving Sri Lanka.

ARMY CAPTURES BUND; AIR FORCE STRIKES AREA SOUTH OF SAFE ZONE

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14. (SBU) On April 26, the Army confirmed capture of additional ground and reported 1,000 more civilians escaped, in addition to 500-600 overnight on April 25-26. A Ministry of Defense official declared no knowledge of an official LTTE unilateral ceasefire offer, as the Government does not consider a TamilNet report a credible source or method of communicating such an offer. On April 27, a Sri Lankan Army source reported further advances along the beach southwards within the no-fire zone. Outside the no-fire zone, elements of 53 Division captured a portion of another LTTE earth berm. The Sri Lankan Air Force says it continues to attack targets only in the area south of the CSZ and north of Mullaitivu. Targets include LTTE fighting positions in the area south of the safe zone. ICRC separately confirmed reports of shelling south of the no-fire zone. (DAO Comment: This may be an attempt to soften up the area for a possible northern push. Up to this point, no Army units have crossed the water obstacle north of Mullaitivu.) An Air Force source reports there is no use of attack helicopters since the capture of Puttukudiyuruppu (PTK) East, because they are too vulnerable to LTTE small arms. According to this source, the SLAF Commander categorically refuses to carry out strikes within the "no-fire zone" despite Army pressure to do so.

GOVERNMENT APPOINTEES FOR CRISIS RESPONSE

15. (SBU) On April 24, President Rajapaksa appointed Major General G.A. Chandrasiri, the former military commander in Jaffna, to the position of Competent Authority Officer in charge of the camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs). The Ministry of Foreign Affairs also established a new Humanitarian Task Force of eight officers and additional appointees from relevant ministries to coordinate and facilitate offers of assistance from the international community. The diplomatic note circulated to missions and the UN in Colombo advised, "The Ministry [of Foreign Affairs] would appreciate to receive relief assistance from the international community which could be channeled through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs." The MFA notes the following urgent relief needs: semi-permanent shelters; water purification facilities; assistance in the health sector; and sanitation facilities. (Comment: the Bilateral Donor Group has agreed that semi-permanent or permanent infrastructure should not be funded in IDP camps as this does not support a rapid return of civilians to their home communities. Such

support to resettlement communities may be appropriate.)

MEDEVACS CONTINUE BUT LITTLE FOOD OR MEDS

¶6. (SBU) ICRC Deputy Tony Dalziel informed Charge that medical evacuations from the safe zone will resume April 28. The "Green Ocean" will depart Trincomalee the evening of April 27 for the safe zone and will take out wounded and sick civilians to Pulmoddai April 28. Medevacs are also planned on April 29 and 30. Thirty tons of food will be taken in on each sailing of the Green Ocean. (COMMENT: This is a welcome development, as no food went in on the Green Ocean last week and there have been no food deliveries to the "safe zone" since early April). ICRC requests to include medicine in shipments

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have not been approved by the GSL (UN Resident Representative Neil Buhne reported to Charge on April 27 that the Government agreed to deliver medicine on an ICRC shipment. Post will report in future sitreps if this commitment is met.) Dalziel notes that security conditions and lack of distribution infrastructure in the safe zone due to the fighting continue to prevent a larger food ship from making a delivery into the safe zone. Unloading a 1000-plus food shipment takes four days, and as of now ICRC can only negotiate windows of 2-3 hours.

ESTIMATES OF CIVILIAN DEATHS, DISPLACEMENTS

¶7. (SBU) The Ministry of Defense reported on April 26 that the Sri Lankan Army rescued 3,141 civilians from Valayarmadam coastal village, and rescued an additional 107 persons from Puthukudiyiruppu East area. Tamil sources within the conflict zone report 174 civilians were killed and 212 injured on April 24. On April 25, they reported 39 airstrikes with 32 killed and 48 injured. (Reports from Tamil sources cannot be confirmed and are frequently exaggerated. The UN separately discounted the reports of airstrikes on April 25.) The UN estimates that an estimated 40,000 to 50,000 civilians are still held in the conflict area by LTTE. One UN local staff member remains in the conflict zone.

¶8. (U) UNHCR reports that as of April 25 there were 120,617 arrivals from the conflict zone in IDP camps (including all arrivals since late October). This figure does not include the tens of thousands of civilians now in transit to the Government-designated camps.

MOORE